BRA
734

Historic Timeline

CHINATOWN DISTRICT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Community Growth and Neighborhood Conservation

I POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN

1 Chinatown: A Community at a Crossroads
2 Community-Based Planning Process
3 The Guiding Vision of Growth

II CONTEXT FOR THE PLAN

1 Past, Present, and Forces of Changes
2 Opportunities and Constraints

III DISTRICT PLAN POLICIES

1 Redirect the Institutional Growth
2 Stop the Combat Zone Encroachment
3 Strengthen the Family Neighborhood
4 Broaden the Economic Base
5 Reinforce the Community Service Network
6 Enhance Chinatown's Cultural Heritage and Streetscape
7 Protect the Historic Land Base
8 Build a Land Bridge for the Future

IV THE DISTRICT PLAN

1 Land Use
2 Housing
3 Neighborhood Bussinesses and Employment
4 Community Services and Facilities
5 Urban Design and Streetscape
6 Public Realm and Open Space
7 Environmental Controls
8 Historic Preservation
9 Transportation →

V ACHIEVING THE PLAN

1 Community Process
2 Zoning
3 Implementation

APPENDIX

A Draft Chinatown Community Plan
B Parcel A/B/C Housing Development Plan
C Transportation Improvement Plan
D Historic Building Inventory

9CONTENT28/II

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHINATOWN

ZONING UPDATE

DECEMBER 1989

TO: CHINATOWN-SOUTH COVE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

FROM: STEPHEN COYLE, BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

DATE: DECEMBER 11, 1989

RE: PROGRESS UPDATE

CHINATOWN COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN AND ZONING PLAN

The presentation of the final draft Chinatown Community Plan and Chinatown District Zoning Plan to the neighborhood council for review is scheduled for January 16, followed by the BRA hearing on January 25.

The Chinatown Zoning Map and Summary enclosed here for your information outline the zoning regulations for Building Height and Density that are the results of over a year of discussion and consultation with the neighborhood council, community advocates, and institutional representatives. The Executive Summary outlines the planning framework and the common visions that have evolved from the community-based master plan initiative that was launched by the neighborhood council and the city in 1987.

PARCEL A/B/C

Requests for intermediate funding for Parcels A/B/C will be submitted to the BRA Board for approval on Thursday, December 14. In addition to a $15,000 planning grant for Parcel C to complete the predevelopment planning tasks, a $25,000 interest free loan for architectural services and a $10,000 interest free loan for development consultant services will also be requested for Parcel B for preparing the submissions to RDAL and SHARP in January and February respectively. The BRA will also undertake the development of an economic model for Parcel A/B/C with the respective teams to finalize the financial plan.

NEW ENGLAND MEDICAL CENTER MASTER PLAN

The approval of the New England Medical Center Master Plan is scheduled around January and February, contingent upon the approval of the Transportation Access Plan, and a Community Benefit Plan of adequate specificity for the benefit provisions.

CASTLE SQUARE GARAGE

A BRA Board meeting on the project summary is scheduled for December 28 to move the various issues of major concerns to the tenants and the Chinatown community to a satisfactory closure.

With your continued participation, we look forward to accomplishing these and other projects with primary significance to Chinatown in the coming New Year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
COMMUNITY GROWTH AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

For the Chinatown community, the celebration of a unique cultural heritage and tradition has to be supported with the possibility and the promise of change for a better future. As Chinatown approaches the 1990s, the historic immigrant neighborhood is faced with a set of new opportunities and resources that are critical to the realization of its future growth and development.

These opportunities and resources have resulted from the community advocacy efforts and the city policies that guided 1980s downtown development boom to create housing and economic benefits for the neighborhoods. The Chinatown community's aspiration for change and action is further urged on by the demise of the Combat Zone along with the planned resurgence of the nearby Midtown Cultural District as a cultural hub and the South Station area as a technological center.

To build and improve the future for its rapidly growing community, Chinatown should act on these immediate opportunities. However, potential changes also prompt an uncertainty about the long-term viability of the immigrant neighborhood now faced with the upscale transformation of its adjacent districts. The proposed new developments also cause concerns for the environmental quality of this densely populated residential and commercial neighborhood.

The challenge confronting Chinatown as a community of Asian immigrants is not simply to protect the existing residential and business sectors, but also to broaden its housing and economic base. At the same time, the community wants to reinforce its neighborhood as a historic anchor for immigrant families, small businesses, and community services.

The task confronting Chinatown as a strategically located center city neighborhood is not simply to renovate or rebuild its dismal physical environment. The challenge is also to enhance a unique cultural heritage that is embodied in its ~~buildings,~~ streets, and the lively pedestrian environment, while still enabling a progressive transformation of the physical appearance of the neighborhood.

In short, the goal of the comprehensive development plan for Chinatown is to generate a social, economic, and physical environment that supports and nurtures

munity growth without undermining the quality of
e or destroying the singular identity and legacies
the neighborhood.

natown seeks to protect the existing land base from
ntown encroachment on its northern and westerns
es, from institutional expansion in its midst, and
n transportation construction at its eastern and
thern boundaries. In addition, Chinatown looks to
ner additional land resources for future community
wth and development. Aside from reclaiming the
eway subdistrict area that was lost to the
struction of interstate highway, Chinatown seeks to
idify its expansion into the Midtown Cultural
trict, a process that has been spearheaded by Asian
ll businesses and entrepreneurs.

physical planning and development of Chinatown can
me a catalyst for creating opportunities in
rdable housing, good jobs, community services,
nomic diversification, transportation access, and
c amenities for recreation and cultural and arts
gramming.

community-based comprehensive development plan for
natown necessarily goes beyond the physical
tribution of land uses, the manipulation of urban
n, and the management of traffic and transportation
astructure. The social and economic consequences
the driving force behind the district's grassroots
ning. Proactive community participation, public
cation, capacity building, and community empowerment
the keys to the long-term viability of the
natown community, and have become an integral part
he community-based planning process.

Chinatown Community Plan adopted with the Zoning
will mark the first time in the history of
natown when the community needs and aspirations have
led the city's blueprint for the future growth and
elopment of the neighborhood.

long-term success of the plan will depend on the
ort of a host of public, private, and community
ties. Public actions and creative interventions
to be enhanced with community initiative and
ate ingenuity. The continued growth and prosperity
hinatown as a historic residential neighborhood and
ltural, business, and service center can ultimately
ch Boston as a city of neighborhoods that thrives
ts diverse heritage.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AREA

PDA I	**Residential Chinatown**	**175'/FAR 6**
PDA II	**Turnpike Air-Rights**	**250'/FAR 6**
PDA III	**Chinatown Gateway/ South Bay Interchange**	**300'/FAR 10**

To allow desirable growth benefiting the Chinatown community, a Planned Development Area (PDA) can be designated in the Residential Chinatown, the Turnpike Air-Rights, and the Chinatown Gateway areas. Each proposed project must adhere to a development plan which is approved only after public hearings by the BRA and the Zoning Commission. Public benefits being considered include affordable housing, community services, open space, economic opportunities, and substantial rehabilitation of historic theatres.

Upon approval, a project within a PDA can increase its building height and density to 175' and FAR 6 in PDA I, Residential Chinatown; 250' and FAR 6 in PDA II, Turnpike Air-Rights; 300' and FAR 10 in PDA III, Chinatown Gateway/South Bay Interchange.

Both PDA in the Turnpike Air-Rights area and the Chinatown Gateway area are also designated as Special Study Area to allow for continued planning analysis and refinements before permanent zoning regulations are recommended.

OPEN SPACE ZONE

Gateway Park (Parkland)
Tai-Tung Park (Urban Plaza)
Pagoda Park (Parkland)

To protect and expand public parks, recreation areas, and green spaces in Chinatown, three permanent open space zones are proposed: the Gateway Park in the Commercial Chinatown area, the Tai-Tung Park (116 Tyler Street) in the Residential Chinatown area, and the Pagoda Park in the Chinatown Gateway area.

Additional permanent open space zones could be designated as a result of the comprehensive planning study for the Tyler Street Special Study Area, the Chinatown Gateway Special Study Area, and the Turnpike Air-Rights Special Study Area.

CHINATOWN PROPOSED ZONING

PDA I - RESIDENTIAL *175' / FAR 6*

PDA II - TURNPIKE AIR RIGHTS *250' / FAR 6*

PDA III - CHINATOWN GATEWAY / SOUTH BAY INTERCHANGE *300' / FAR 10*

SPECIAL STUDY AREAS

1. TYLER STREET *80' / 125' / FAR 6-8*
2. TURNPIKE AIR RIGHTS
3. CHINATOWN GATEWAY, SOUTH BAY INTERCHANGE

PROTECTION AREAS

A. LIBERTY TREE *65' 80' / FAR 6.7*

B. BEACH/KNAPP *65' 80' / FAR 6.7*

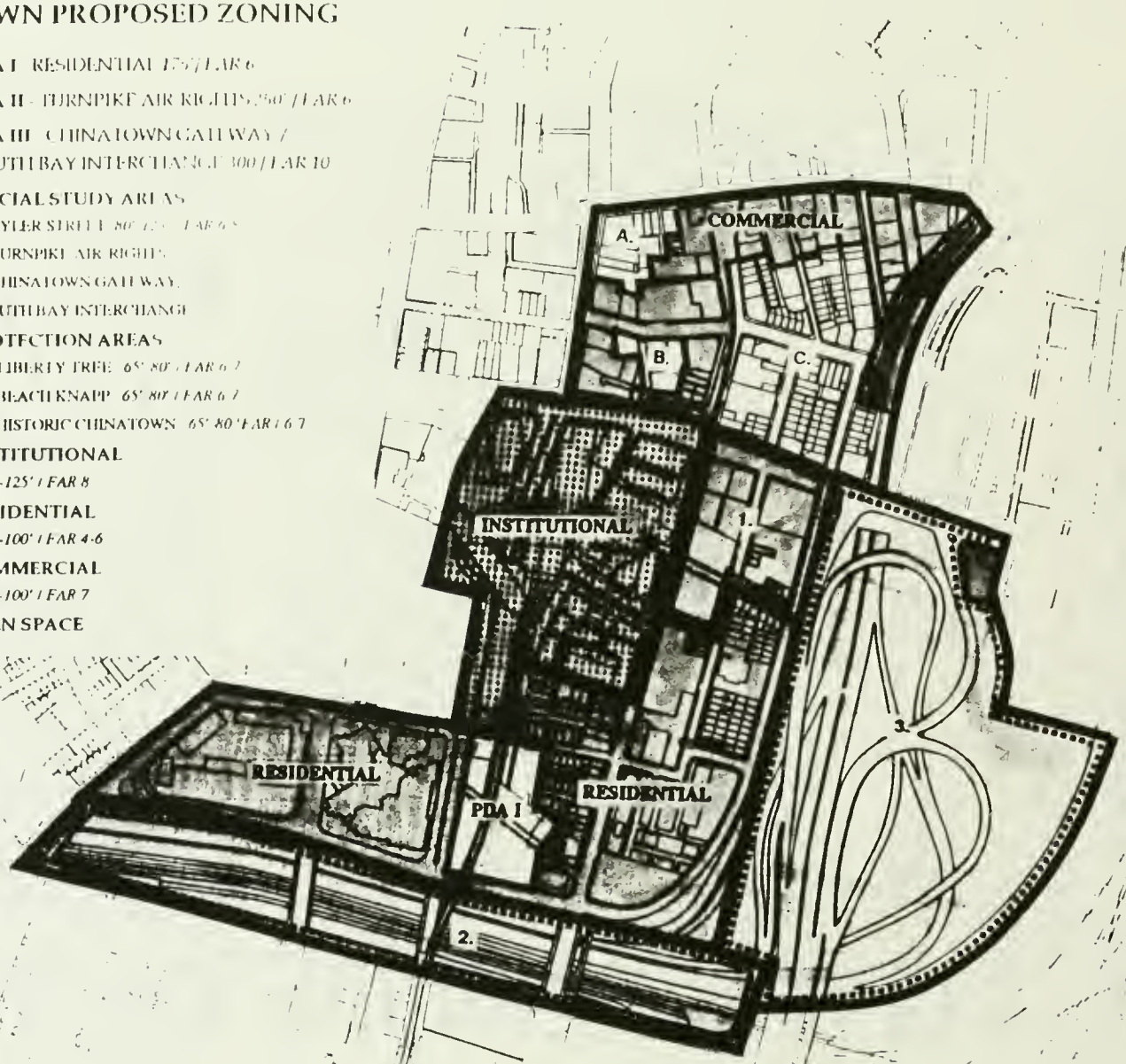
C. HISTORIC CHINATOWN *65' 80' FAR / 6.7*

INSTITUTIONAL
80'-125' / FAR 8

RESIDENTIAL
80'-100' / FAR 4-6

COMMERCIAL
80'-100' / FAR 7

OPEN SPACE



Kuen

URBAN DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

12/19/89

Overview

Chinatown is a small downtown neighborhood that measures about 4 blocks east to west and about 7 blocks north to south. Most of the neighborhood is comprised of 20' x 70' lots originally divided for rowhouses a century ago. Over one half of the buildings in Chinatown are four stories or less, and nearly all of them are under 100' high. A few exceptions exist at the housing towers and institutional buildings erected since the 1970s, obliterating the tight-knit urban texture that reflects the neighborhood's origin dated from the 19th century.

The land-locked neighborhood is composed of three subareas--business, residential, and institutional--and framed by the Midtown Cultural District, the South Station Economic Development Area, the Leather District, and the South End. This compact urban core is traversed by two sets of traffic networks. In addition to local neighborhood streets, major city carriers and regional arteries converge in and around the neighborhood.

Chinatown enjoys the convenience provided by its central location in the transportation network and its proximity to the civic and business hub of the city. However, Chinatown is fragmented and isolated by heavy traffic in its midst or circulating at its borders, while suffering a diminished environmental quality. The diverse uses and users that converge on the limited land area add to the richness and the vitality of Chinatown, but at the same time result in conflict and confusion. The modestly scaled structures in Chinatown oftentimes are easily obscured and overwhelmed by the institutional buildings in its midst or the commercial buildings at its border.

Overall Goal: **Enhance the rich diversity and vitality of the Chinatown built environment while reinforcing its image, visibility, and environmental quality.**

Objectives:

1 Reinforce neighborhood image.

Enhance a unique neighborhood image that reflects the historic and cultural heritage of Chinatown to establish Chinatown in the downtown landscape.

Shaping and upgrading the image of Chinatown has to go beyond the multi-lingual store signs and commercialized cultural props such as the pagoda-topped phone booths.

Individual expressions by proprietors and residents should be encouraged. In addition, creative adaptation, representation, or preservation of various historic and cultural legacies should be explored in the design and the management of every aspect of the environment, from buildings and interiors of public space to streets and open space.

2 Improve visibility and orientation.

Improve the visibility and orientation of Chinatown from the adjacent districts, especially from the Midtown Cultural District, the South Station area, and the Leather District.

Orientation can be improved with street signs and maps that better connect Chinatown with the downtown, or more expressive transit station design and directory systems. Other effective measures include improving or creating critical visual corridors and intersections linking Chinatown with the surrounding districts visually and physically. These can be enhanced with the judicious placement of cultural and community landmarks and signatures.

3 Enhance a neighborhood-wide community network.

Buildings, streets, and open space in Chinatown should accommodate a continuous community presence throughout the commercial, the residential, and the institutional cores.

A street-level community network need to be enhanced to ensure a convenient and safe pedestrian circulation network connecting various activity nodes, open space, transit points, and parking; ground-floor uses oriented to Chinatown residents, shoppers, patrons, and service clients; and designs and furnishings reinforcing a community presence.

4 Enforce architectural transition and interface sensitive to the neighborhood character.

At the sensitive edges or sites in Chinatown where different uses or districts converge, building designs should response to the predominant commercial and residential character and identity of Chinatown.

Aside from avoiding visual and sensory intrusions through sensitive handling of building scale, height, massing, and facade treatment, creative space planning and siting should further seek to strengthen the nearby residential

and commercial environment in Chinatown. This is important not only for the institutional structures and the residential and commercial mixed-use buildings in its midst but also for the commercial buildings bordering Chinatown.

5 Upgrade environmental quality.

The residential and commercial environment in Chinatown should be free of excessive shadows, downdrafts, and other discomforting and unhealthy offense on the residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors in this densely populated and heavily used neighborhood.

....

Guidelines for Urban Design and Environmental Control

OPEN SPACE

Overview

Chinatown is the most densely populated neighborhood in Boston and its housing units have the highest overcrowding rate in the city. The neighborhood also has more families and elderly residents. The limited number of indoor recreation facilities in Chinatown further aggravate the demand for open space. Nevertheless, Chinatown offers the least amount of open space to its residents. Greenery is scarce. Access to the nearby Boston Common and the Public Garden has long been threatened by the the presence of the Combat Zone.

About 0.3 acres of open space are available within the existing Chinatown proper, plus another 2.5 acres provided by the Pagoda Park in the Gateway site and the Eliot Norton Park in the adjacent Bay Village. In total, open space averages less than 0.6 acre per 1000 Chinatown residents, compared to 1.2 acres for the South End. In addition, these facilities currently used by the Chinatown residents and visitors suffer from inconvenient location, poor security, inadequate maintenance, or limited space.

Ironically, the open asphalt parking lots scattered around Chinatown have provided some temporary visual relief in the densely built neighborhood. With few other alternative available, these parking lots along with the congested streets and the crowded sidewalks have also become make-shift ball parks, tot lots, or adventurous playgrounds in Chinatown.

Overall Goal: **Create a variety of open space and public realm to serve the divergent social and recreational needs of Chinatown's residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors.**

Objectives:

1 **Increase accessible, safe, and comfortably furnished open space in the neighborhood.**

The location, design, and management of the various open space facilities should provide accessibility, safety, and comfort for Chinatown users.

Open space that encourages community use should be created at critical intersections, entry points, and along important paths and streets in Chinatown. These should not be cut off by traffic and should be within

close walking distance of the residential and commercial cores in Chinatown. Aside from convenient location, the design and management of open space facilities should ensure adequate safety and comfort. These community-oriented open space settings should be incorporated in any large scale institutional projects and commercial/ development in Chinatown. Commity

2 Extend the open space network.

Extend the network of green open spaces from Chinatown to the nearby Midtown Cultural District, the Boston Common, the Public Garden, and further along the South West Corridor. ż further C.A. Linear Park.

An extended open space network will enable Chinatown residents and workers to expand their realm of outdoor recreation and relaxation. Improvement in pedestrian safety and park security can increase the use of open space in the nearby Midtown Cultural District and Bay Village. Through public information and outreach geared towards the immigrants, this open space network can be extended to the many open space resources along the Southwest Corridor that are easily accessible by the Orange ~~Line~~, such as the Arnold Arboretum and the Franklin Park.

3 Explore alternative green places.

Alternative forms of green places should be amply and creatively provided throughout the public environment in Chinatown.

Plantings and vegetation should not be limited to parks, gardens, playgrounds, or tot lots but extended to the street environment in Chinatown as well as indoor public places. Simple measures such as window displays, hanging greens, and sidewalk planters should be encouraged. Where appropriate, roof-top gardens, canopied streets, green arcades, and other possibilities should be explored to increase the enjoyment of green places by residents and workers in their daily life.

4 Create a neighborhood common and enhance community identity through the open space.

A neighborhood common should be created to reinforce the sense of community that is shared by the residents and workers in Chinatown with the shoppers and visitors from the Asian community at large.

A neighborhood common for Chinatown can serve as a focal

point in the community and provide a central stage for a rich of community functions, celebrations, and festivals that unfold with the seasons. Through creative design and management, a neighborhood common can take the form of a street, a park, or a combination of both. In addition, open space design in general, ranging from layout, architecctural detailing and furnishings to vegetation, should seek to reflect the unique cultural heritage of the community. Parcel C or Posner parcel along Oak St

5 Enhance versatility of design and management.

Versatile design and management should be utilized to increase the capacity of the limited open space and recreation facilities in Chinatown.

Open space in Chinatown has to address the varying needs of elderly folks, young children, odd-hour shift-workers, large-volume shoppers, and weekend visitors. Versatile designs such as sitting walls and tree-fences should be explored when possible to increase the efficiency of limited space. Flexible management of privately held or institutionally owned outdoor space and recreation facilities should be encouraged to make possible or increase community uses and ameliorate the demand on open space.

Guidelines for Open Space

File 9/28/'89

Subdistricts by Use

華埠分區

1 Historic Chinatown Subdistrict
華埠歷史區

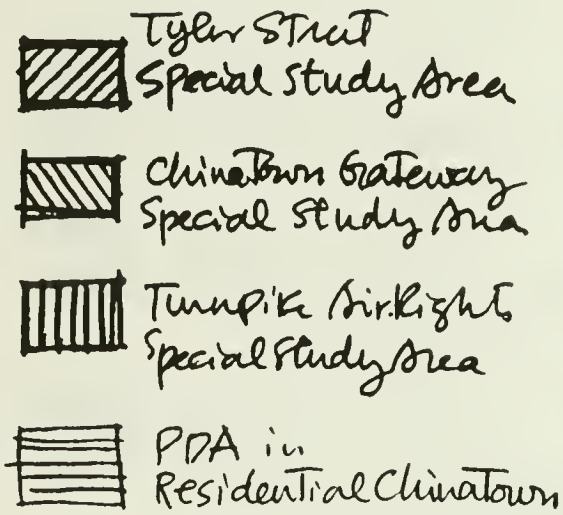
2 Commercial Chinatown Edge Subdistrict
華埠商業外緣區

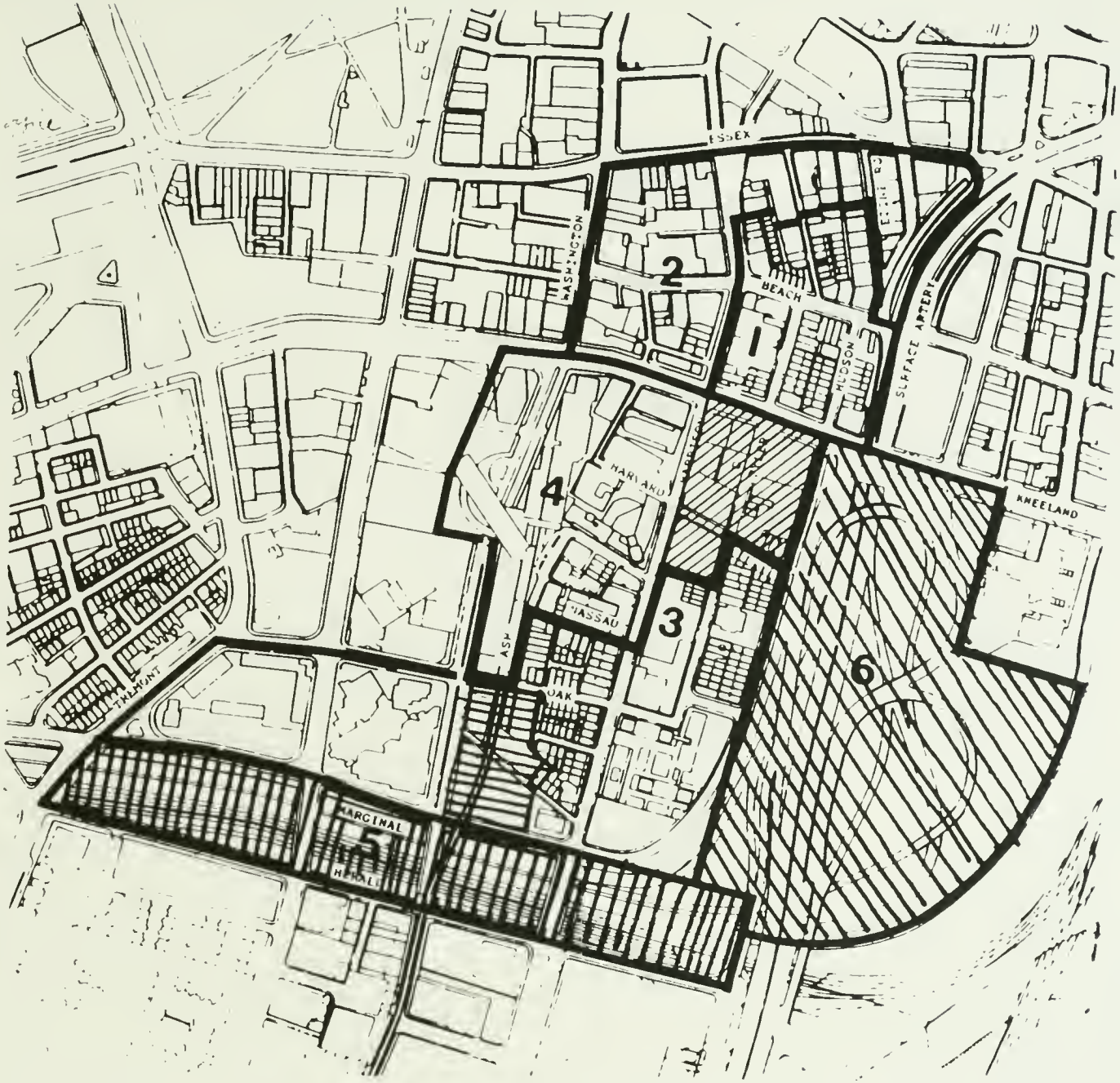
3 Residential Chinatown Subdistrict
華埠住宅區

4 Institutional Subdistrict
機構學院區

5 Turnpike Air-Right Subdistrict
麻省公路上空開發區

6 Chinatown Gateway Subdistrict
華埠牌樓區





BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 06314 782 9

Chinatown District
Height / Density (FAR)

- Historic Chinatown Protection Area
- Liberty Tree Protection Area
- Beach - Knapp Street Protection Area

65'/6 A.O.R
80'/7 with Article 31 Review

- 80'/6 A.O.R.
  125'/8 w/ Article 31 Review
- 80'/4 A.O.R.
  100'/6 w/ Article 31 review
- 125'/8 A.O.R.
  155'/10 w/ Article 31
- 80'/6 A.O.R
  100'/7 w/ Article 31